Instructional Leadership at Government Secondary Schools: An Analytical Study

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the instructional leadership behavior of school principals at government Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools for boys in District Malakand. In this quantitative study the data were collected through the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) from teachers of the selected schools about their principals. Through systematic random sampling techniques 198 respondents were selected out of 478 teachers. The collected data were analyzed through mean scores, standard deviation, and chi-square. The results showed that most of the principals do not follow the instructional leadership principles as mentioned in the PIMRS. All the principals monitor students' academic progress. The majority of the principals are unable to coordinate the curriculum and guide the teachers in organizing academic activities. They do not reinforce good performance in meetings, less number of principals meet individually with students. Further, they do not promote the professional development of teachers in schools. This study recommends that the principles may follow the instructional leadership goals as school principals; it would improve the teaching and learning process in the schools.

***Keywords**:* Instructional Leadership; problem-solving skills; teachers' incentives, promoting professional development

Introduction

Leadership plays an important role in any organization and educational institutions are no exceptions in this regard. Leadership means involving all stakeholders cooperatively in mutual learning and development for enhancing teaching and learning in schools (Lima, 2008). There is a vast work on the relationship of effective instructional leadership and improvement of schools and students' achievement (Duke & Stiggins, 1985, Valentine & Prater, 2011, Stronge, Richard & Catano, 2008). According to Hallinger (2011) the most important contribution of the movement for effective schools was the coinage of the term 'instructional leadership' in the field of education.

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Many researchers have tried to define the term instructional leadership but they could not come up with an agreed definition, conceptualization, practices, and measurement (Ginsberg, 1988; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Stronge, 1993). However no one denies the essential role of instructional leadership in the process of teaching and learning. A plethora of research posits that the role of principal is of paramount importance in schooling and as a whole improvement of school (Duke & Stiggins, 1985; Eberts & Stone, 1988; Hallinger & Heck, 1996). The reasons are effective school leaders always concentrate their attention on the curricular side of the school, like, academic goals, developing curriculum, gauging the effectiveness of teachers' teaching practices, and facilitating instructional improvement and these behaviors related with the school principals are called instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2012; Marks & Printy, 2003; Southworth, 2002).

There is a bifurcation of opinion about principals in schools about their direct involvement. Some experts support the view and others do not support it. For instance, Gillat and Sulzer-Azaroff (1994) supported principals' direct intervention in teaching improvement and student learning. They posit that a principal may give his direct input in setting and forming goals at students, and giving feedback and praise to students, student achievement and they argue that these actions have a direct influence on the academic achievement of students. But on the other side of the border researchers have their views who do not favor direct involvement. They opine that due to the nature of the job direct involvement is not as important as an indirect influence. Therefore, they may indirectly influence the teaching-learning process (Fireston & Wilson, 1985). Bellibas (2015) thinks that even though the principals may not directly influence the instructional process but they may do it by providing a conducive environment, providing opportunities for professional development, and motivating for improvement. Moreover, Sammons, Day, and Ko (2011) found that leadership has a direct as well indirect effect on many aspects of schools, like, classroom processes and academic achievements of students.

Furthermore, it plays an important role in organizational change and innovation. Effective leaders have similarities in their major aspects, for instance, distributed leadership, transactional approaches, and more democratic transformational leadership are considered as main effective aspects internationally (Ngcobo, & Tilky, 2010). Similarly, Jacobson (2011) found that direction setting, developing people, and redesigning the organization were common practices almost in all contexts. Effective principals develop a high level of trust in schools, as Tahir, Musah, Al-Hudawi, Yusof, and Yasin (2015) found that effective principals create trust in schools.

Similarly, there are certain functions which are essential for instructional leaders, for instance, Hallinger (1985) enlisted the instructional functions of principals as 1) designing comprehensible and applicable goals, 2) communicating the school goals effectively to the teacher through different means, 3) supervising and evaluating 4) coordinating and reviewing the curriculum for achieving the school goals, 5) monitoring students' progress and different activities in schools, 6) protecting instructional time by taking necessary measures, 7) maintaining high visibility by talking to teachers and students in schools, 8) giving incentives for teachers either individually or publically as well as reward programs, 9) taking care of professional development of teachers for enhancing their effectiveness in class, and 10) providing incentives for learning in school. Park (2016) reviewed the literature on the effective school leadership from 2010 to 2015 and found that more democratic transformational leadership, distributed leadership, transactional approaches and instructional leadership is thought as a feature of effective leadership for organizational change and he added that principal leadership behaviors impact both teachers and students achievement, behavior, teachers motivation, productivity and effectiveness of their schools. Furthermore, responsible and effective principals create a warm and nurturing environment for teachers, parents, and students and work together with them for improvement.

There are different theories about leaders and these theories are equally applicable in educational leadership as well, for instance, Trait Theory, believes in the personal qualities of leaders. Some of these personal qualities are physical characteristics, intelligence, motives, temperament, and skills. Stogdill's (1948) after reviewing available literature on the topic found that some personal traits, like, capacity, intelligence, alertness, verbal facility, originality, scholarship, athletic

activities; responsibility, initiative, perseverance, assertiveness, confidence, working for excellence; sociability, cooperation, flexibility, and socioeconomic position and popularity are some of the traits which differentiate between a leader and no- leader.

On the other hand behavior theory of leadership theorizes that interactive relations or consideration for others and task-specific behaviors such as goal achievement and production are characteristics of effective leaders (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Hemphill and Coons (1950) while explaining the relationship between effective leadership and individuals who are striving to establish well-defined patterns of organization, ways of communication, and methods of procedure from different perspectives. Leaders initiate friendship, believe in trust, respect, and show warmth in the relationship between himself and the other staff members (Halpin, 1966, p. 39). These general theories of leaders have important implications for educational leaders as well.

Context and rationale of the Study

All the schools in Pakistan, like, schools in other countries have instructional leaders in schools, called the principal. They look after the overall activities of the schools. In most of the schools there are 2 positions of principals, principal and vice-principal. They distribute the activities of schools and work collaboratively for the success of a school. The role of principals, like, other countries as discussed in the introduction for the effectiveness of schools, is considered vital for the success of schools. An effective school principal may make a worthwhile difference in the learning of students and the effectiveness of schools.

The study aims to investigate the most essential role of principals from the perspectives of teachers because the teachers may be able to give a true account of the principals' behavior in schools. The study would add to the available stock of knowledge on principal instructional behavior because more pragmatic researchers are now needed to extend the research about instructional the role of principals, especially in East Asian regions (Hallinger & Bryant, 2013a, b). The study will be beneficial for trainers, policymakers, and principals.

Statement of the Problem

All over the world principals of a school play an important role in ensuring effective teaching and learning. The current study investigated instructional leadership behaviors of principals at boys' secondary and

higher secondary schools in district Malakand of Pakistan. The aim was to find out if the school principals follow the basic principles of instructional leadership.

Objectives

1. To investigate the role of principals as an instructional leadership at government boys high and higher secondary schools
2. To recommends possible suggestions for improving the instructional role of principals in government boys' secondary schools

Research Methodology

This was a descriptive quantitative research study. The researcher made all the efforts to investigate the research problem keeping in view the research model of the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS). The data were collected from school principals and teachers about the instructional leadership behavior of principals.

Population and sample group

The population of the current research consisted of all high and higher secondary school principals and teachers. There were a total of 478 Subject Specialists teachers in district Malakand at the time of the study. This population was identified as the study was delimited to District Malakand and its male high and higher secondary schools. There were a total of 51 schools in the district, a total of 30 schools were randomly selected. Through systematic random sampling techniques 198 respondents were selected out of 478 teachers.

Research Instruments

Data were collected through the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) (Hallinger, 1983) adapted by Saeed, Khan, and Khan (2018). There are a total of 10 dimensions that measure different behaviors of principals. These dimensions are further divided into 10 instructional leadership functions. Each one has different items. These 10 instructional functions consist of: framing the school's goals, communicating the schools' goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, monitoring student progress, protecting instructional time, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for learning.

The survey consisted of 50 Likert type questions ranging from one to five, a five-point rating scale was used. The scale consists of 10 subscales. The reliability for these 10 subscales was 0.80 using Cronbach's test which measures the internal consistency of items. The subscale of the PIMRS instruments is scored by calculating the mean for the items that composed each subscale. There were a total of 50 items in the original scale. However, it was felt that some of the dimensions were missing in the questionnaire. Therefore, dimensions related to problem-solving skills, community involvement skills, collegiality skills and relations with higher authorities were included. Thus the total number of items went to 66 items.

Finally, the survey consisted of 66 items, not including demographics. The teachers gave their responses about the instructional leadership of principals. The researcher used the PIMRS instrument because it has been used in different contexts all over the world and it is a valid instrument in this regard.

Data Collection

Data about principals from teachers were collected from the selected schools. Thirty schools were randomly selected and names of principals and teachers were identified from the office of the District Education Office Male Section. The questionnaire packets were prepared for teachers. Moreover, a self - addressed envelope was also enclosed in the questionnaire packets. The researcher visited all schools personally for the collection of data. Most of the questionnaires were filled on the spot, and some were left with the teachers when they were unable to fill it on the spot. The schools were visited again, and the teachers were requested for filling the questionnaire. Some of the questionnaires were sent by the principal via post or other people. After a lot of effort the researcher was able to get responses from 185 teachers about the instructional practices of principals and later on the response of the 5 teachers was not included in the data because of one or another reason.

Data Analysis

After the collection of data, it was fed into SPSS version 21 for data analysis. First of all the researchers cleaned the data before the process of analysis. For the analysis of the data mean and standard deviation and chi-square were calculated for finding the instructional leadership behaviors of school principals. Furthermore the ranges of mean scores were from 5.00 to 4.51 = Always, 4.50 to 3.51 = Often, 3.50 to 2.51 = Sometimes, 2.50 to 1.51 = Rarely and 1.50 to 1.00 = Never. The cumulative mean scores of the constructs were calculated and were explained in the light of standard deviation.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 Designing, communicating, coordinating and supervising schools' goals, curriculum, and instruction

Instructional Leadership Constructs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	χ^2	Sig
Framing school goals	198	3.756	.6124	04	109.152	.000
Communicating school goals to stakeholders	198	3.558	.604	04	113.879	.000
Coordination for curriculum	198	2.497	.495	04	91.576	.000
Supervision and evaluation of instruction	198	2.30	.502	04	101.556	.000
Protecting instructional time	198	3.93	.754	04	55.667	.000

Instructional leadership has one of the most important responsibilities of designing institutional goals and its communication to the stakeholders. The results revealed (mean 3.756 and 3.558 with std deviation .6124 and .604 χ^2 = 109.152 and 113.879) the most of the instructional leaders at schools level design reflective schools goals and they communicate it effectively to all the stakeholders. These results conform with the results of Marks and Printy (2003) and Southworth (2002) who are of the view the instructional leaders mostly concentrate on framing organizational goals.

Further the instructional leaders were unable to coordinate in the implementation of curriculum activities which is their prime responsibility. Similarly, they were unable to supervise and evaluate the instructional activities at school level as shown by the results (mean 2.497 and 2.30 with std deviation .495 and .502, χ^2 = 91.576 and 101.556). The results are not in conformity with the results of Duke and Stiggins (1985) whose findings revealed that instructional leaderships supervise and evaluate the instructional activities at the school level. Further they support and guide teachers in the instructional practices.

Unlike the above, the instructional leaders were found more interested in protecting the instructional time as shown by the results (mean 3.93 with std deviation .754 χ^2 = 55.667). These results are supporting the results of Saeed, Khan, and Khan (2018) who viewed that in Pakistan the instructional leaders are mostly concentrating on this construct.

Table 2 *Leaders Visibility, incentives for teachers, learning, professional development, and problem-solving skills*

Instructional Leadership Constructs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	χ^2	Sig
Maintaining high visibility	198	2.305	.628	04	69.782	.000
Providing incentives for teachers	198	2.693	.474	04	81.391	.000
Promoting professional development	198	3.123	.681	04	81.531	.000
Providing incentive for learning	198	2.211	.532	04	76.704	.000
Problem-solving skills	198	3.791	.717	04	187.648	.000

Instructional leaders were not that much visible in the academic activities of schools. They were sometimes providing incentives in terms of appreciating teachers for their productive work as shown by the results (mean 2.305 and 2.693 with std deviation .628 and .474 χ^2 = 69.782 and 81.391). The results are similar to the findings of Park (2016) who was of the view that instructional leaders need to provide effective reward and punishment systems to maintain high level motivation of teachers.

Furthermore, instructional leaders sometimes work for the professional development of teachers which enables them to utilize the potentials for the betterment of the teaching-learning process as shown by the results (mean score 3.123 with std deviation .681, χ^2 = 81.531). However, in promoting learning at school the instructional leaders were unable to provide effective incentives as reflected by results (mean score 2.211 with std deviation .532, χ^2 = 76.704). On the contrary they were good in problem-solving skills as they involve teachers and supporting staff in resolving school problems effectively as reflected by results (mean score 3.791 with std deviation .717, χ^2 = 187.648).

These results are similar to the findings of Lima (2008) who thought that the professional development of teachers is an important aspect where the instructional leaders concentrate. Bellibas (2015) conducted a study in Turkey and concluded that instructional leaders like principals and school heads design rigorous activities for promoting learning which is on the opposite pole of this study result where the principals are not giving much concentration on this aspect of the school.

But in Pakistan school principals don't have more power to finance the professional development activities for teachers and here are very rare opportunities for the professional development in-service trainings and opportunities.

Table 3 *Community Involvement, collegiality skills, relations with high ups and monitoring students' academic progress*

Instructional Leadership Constructs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	χ^2	Sig
Community involvement skills	198	2.099	.774	04	89.363	.000
Collegiality Skills	198	4.178	.858	04	144.112	.000
Relations with Higher Authorities	198	4.082	.716	04	87.397	.000
Monitoring students' academic progress	198	2.778	.579	04	117.020	.000

The involvement of the community in school matters is considered as important therefore instructional leaders need to have skills to effectively involve them. But the results (mean score 2.099 with std deviation .774 χ^2 = 89.363) showed that instructional leaders are rarely having these skills. On the contrary, they have strong collegiality skills which enable them to lead the school effectively as shown by the results (mean score 4.178 with std deviation .858, χ^2 =144.112). Likewise they always have good relationships with higher authorities as reflective by the mean score 4.082 with std deviation .716 and χ^2 = 87.397. But on the contrary, the instructional leaders rarely monitor students; academic progress as shown by the results (mean score 2.778 with std deviation .579 and χ^2 = 117.020).These results are contradictory to some of the above and Saeed and Khan's (2017) results, as their findings revealed that instructional leaders regularly monitor students' academic progress. Further, the results conform with the findings of Hammersley-Fletcher,

and Brundrett (2008) who consider collegiality skills more important for leaders.

Recommendations

Based on the results and discussions, the study recommends that the principles may follow the instructional leadership as school principals; it would improve the teaching and learning process in the school.

It was recommended for authorities (provincial department of elementary and secondary education) that instructional leaders may be properly trained in coordinating the implementation of curriculum activities at the school level through the Provincial Institute of Teacher Education and Regional Institute of Teacher Education.

There are also recommended that give them authority and financial support for the arrangement of professional development in-service trainings and such other opportunities in a liaison of teacher education departments of public sector universities.

Furthermore, another important dimension is incentives for good performances of teachers where the instructional leaders need support and power for healthy competitions and amicable rewards and punishment systems at the school level. They are also required to be trained in the evaluation and supervision of instructional processes and the learning progress of students.

Future researchers are recommended to investigate the instructional leaders' behavior from gender-wise perspectives and the development of the training module of instructional leaders.

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